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# RADICAL DEMOCRACY

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**D**EMOCRACY means rule of the people. It is a Greek word, derived from "demos"—the people, and "cratos"—power or rule. It is significant that the concept of Democracy was first evolved in ancient Greece. Ancient Greece developed the highest civilisation in antiquity. The concept of Democracy arose as the ideal political organisation of the most highly civilised society. In this, as in many other respects, ancient Greece set up a standard which is valid in principle even to-day.

With the breakdown of antique civilisation, the concept of democracy too was buried for centuries under the ruins of antiquity. The learned scholars of the Renaissance unearthed, restored and revaluated many a treasure of ancient art and wisdom. But the idea of Democracy, conceived and practised according to their light by the ancient Greeks, had to wait for its resurrection until the rise of modern civilisation. After having been in total disregard and disrepute during the dark period of the middle-ages, it has undergone a most tortuous development and suffered much arbitrary experimentation and interpretation at the hand of modern man.

Even before the ideal has been fully attained anywhere in the world, or perhaps because for so long it has remained an unfulfilled ideal, Democracy has been sentenced to death in many quarters as a concept doomed to

failure, having proved unrealisable. There are many instances in history of attempts and genuine efforts at establishing democratic regimes, that is, government of the people, and all of them can be said to have failed. One might reserve final judgment in the case of some of the United Nations, now allied against the Fascist Axis, as they at least continue to profess adherence to democratic ideals. In their case also, discrepancies between democratic professions and practice can be pointed out more easily than features of true democracy; but as long as the democratic intention is there, human ingenuity based on the experience of two thousand years' history of the democratic idea, can be expected to find ways to the realisation of the democratic intention. The other exception is the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, where social ideals democratic in content were introduced, and are practised and defended with such fierce determination as often violates the democratic forms. This is so because Democracy has enemies. The disregard for this fact lies at the root of what has been called the failure of Democracy.

### **Why Democracy Fails**

If Democracy is the rule of the people, and the people comprises the whole population of every country, there should be none to oppose a rule in which every component of the people ought to consider himself a ruler. The fallacy lies in the assumption of a unitary people, of the people as a homogeneous entity. It may have been so in the infancy of mankind, before civilisation broke up society into functional sections, although even

then those with the better claws and teeth must have occupied privileged positions; and this has been so ever since, only claws and teeth were, step by step, replaced by other means of production and earning a livelihood.

The content of Democracy in modern times has been defined as "the greatest good for the greatest number". Therefore, the greatest number of a people ought always to be in favour of Democracy. If yet Democracy is not achieved, it is obviously for either or both of the following reasons: Either the majority does not realise its own interest, that is, the need of establishing Democracy; or the smaller number is opposed to its establishment, because they prefer the greatest good to be distributed among a smaller number, and have the power to enforce their will. They realise that in this way each of the smaller number gets more than if the same amount of good was distributed among the whole of the people.

In lower stages of civilisation, both these reasons are operative. The majority of the people are backward and ignorant. And the productivity of the communities is not high enough for all the goods produced to go round to all the people. Thus, the argument of the minority has the force of plausibility. "The greatest good to the greatest number" is an ideal impossible of fulfilment so long as enough can not be produced to satisfy all.

Ever since humanity outgrew the savage state of nomadic tribes and settled down as increasingly complex social organisms, governed by laws which had to be made and administered by members of the community, the fight for power has been going on in human society. Except



in very rare cases in which the wisdom of early civilisations made the distinction of rulership so onerous that at last none was to be found to govern the community, the power of rulers of society has always been coveted as associated with earthly gain and privileges. When the human community produced little more than it consumed for bare maintenance and reproduction, the little surplus produced over and above that elementary level could not benefit many. Indeed, had it been dissipated by increasing the share of each member of the community by a negligible quantity, society would never have progressed. Because, in those early stages of primitive civilisation, the leisure guaranteed to the rulers, the tribal headmen, the community elders, the sacerdotal chiefs, by the surplus of the community being delivered to them as tribute, promoted the first steps in the realm of human thought; the tributes themselves, taking the shape of ornaments and decorated products of human labour, promoted the earliest creations of arts and crafts.

Thus it is evident that Democracy could not be the ideal of primitive society. The very idea could only be conceived when society was sufficiently developed for a growing number of its members becoming conscious of their desire and aptitude for participating in the administration of the community: and when, on the other hand, enough food and other commodities were produced for an increasingly large number of members of the community experiencing effective demand for it, that is, a demand for which it would not be totally impractical to expect satisfaction.

The conflict for power begins when these two aspirations—social position of power and economic gain—are faced with the obstacle of both the coveted objects being already usurped by some previously instituted authority. Against the dangers of such threatening aspirations on the part of the ordinary members of the community, authority had taken good care to endow itself with the sanction of sanctity, violation of which was said to invoke the wrath of super human forces on whose inscrutable ways of dispensing grace or evil all human fortunes were believed to depend. It took the community of common men ages to discover this fraud, and to lift the veil of divine sanction over the very secular abuses of usurped authority.

### **Precedent of Earlier Civilisation**

The fight against tyrants in antiquity were the first democratic movements known in history. In ancient Greece, the conflict of social ideas had adopted a very articulate form between two political schools—Democracy versus Oligarchy. During the two thousand years since, social conflicts, under various names and forms, have never had any other content than this. The Peloponnesian War, between oligarchic Sparta and democratic Athens, decided the issue in antiquity. Democracy was defeated. And the modern historian may find, in the light of experience of our days, that it was the Spartan Fifth Column, the oligarchic party within Athens, which largely helped to bring about the defeat of democratic Athens. Because the Peloponnesian War was also a kind of inter-national civil war, having a number of analogous features with the present Second World War, both as regards the issues at

stake and the method employed, as also in the implications of the breakdown or survival of a civilisation.

In the Peloponnesian War, the conflict ended with the breakdown of antique civilisation. The main reason may have been that all Athens was not democratic. And Democracy even with the most fervent Democrats in ancient Greece had a very limited significance and application. The "rule of the people" was to be exercised only by the "free citizens." Free citizens were only the upper classes, the propertied and leisured gentry, whose main occupation, beside trading and looking after their landed estates, was to discuss and argue over public affairs. All labour was performed by slaves, who were not citizens of the Democratic City State of Athens, who were not considered to be parts of the people. Yet, numerically they must have been the majority even then.

This precedent of the earliest democratic experiment in history, while it doomed that experiment itself to failure, has tainted the entire history of Democracy ever since. Had the slaves been able to regard themselves as part of the people of Athens, and if they also were beneficiaries of Democracy, they might have won the Peloponnesian War for Athens. But the idea did not occur to the proud Hellenes any more than Henry Ford would consider the idea that his workers might run his factories as well or better than himself. The ancient Greeks, however, had a better ground for their defective democratic conception; most labour was performed by foreigners captured as prisoners in wars, who actually did not often speak the language of the country, and were generally more back-

ward and ignorant than even the lowliest in Greece, which was so much ahead in civilisation to the rest of the then known world.

It was not known to the free citizens of Greece—or if they might have known, they did not admit it—that without labourers building their magnificent temples, carrying loads of precious marble, and producing whatever luxuries were associated with the Greek conception of civilisation, the free citizens of Athens would not be what they were, and could not think as they did, nor create the monuments of art and thought which they did create for the benefit of their posterity. They thought of themselves as a natural aristocracy of creation, as beings different from and better than any other in the world, for the rest of which they had only one collective name—barbarians.

Although they were the first to attempt a reduction of the world to its material elements, no Christ had yet told them that there was a God before whom all men were the same; no Darwin had told them yet that all human beings had one origin and were essentially and materially equal; none had yet attempted to test a slave's brain for its capacity to think the same thoughts as a scholar born of the gentry. Nor were there yet enough goods produced to go round the whole of the population, including the slaves, who had to labour unlimited hours to produce nothing more than what was needed by the privileged few of Athens, then known as Democracy. Their position was so lowly that even their wildest dreams would not have aspired at equality of status, or at participation in the public affairs of a community in which

they were not even admitted; or at anything more than a less beastly existence.

This position only changed towards the end of the middle-ages, when the tools with which labour was performed developed into the first machines. It altered essentially only with the invention of the printing press, and the steam engine; that is, with the introduction of a generally accessible medium of education and of the earlier forms of mass production.

But by that time, the precedent of earlier civilisations, developing on the basis of slave labour, had attached to labour itself the odium of degradation and humiliation. While to create and produce are basic urges in human nature, not to do too much of it appears to be one of the prime motive forces towards the acquisition of power and authority, which positions alone guaranteed to some men at least leisure and comfort in ages when all had to labour hard to produce enough for themselves to eat and exist. These two tendencies—disregard for the value and dignity of the producer and over-estimation of the privileges of power and leisure as ends in themselves—are legacies of the bygone past which vitiate our social life even to-day and make the practice of Democracy impossible. Both these tendencies have no leg left to stand on; modern civilisation has removed any vestige of reason for such tendencies; they are utterly out of tune with the reality of modern times and constitute a mental barrage against mankind deriving the benefit of the progress brought about by itself, and frustrate the potentialities of still greater

progress, opening up as material civilisation develops almost on its own momentum.

### **Labour and Leisure**

When labour consisted mainly in digging the soil, breaking the rock and carrying loads, there was not much dignity about it nor pride to be taken in it for skill and quality. Also, that kind of labour was so hard a drudgery that those performing it must have been nearer in consciousness to the lower animals than to civilised human beings. The very built of man has changed in course of the ages with his changing occupations. The bull-necked, square-shouldered, lowforeheaded, brutalised, picture of ancient slaves differs more from that of the Greek god-like citizen than the latter differs from a modern worker. As the performance of labour becomes more and more civilised with the increasing application of external power to the process of production, the difference between the man performing physical labour and the rest of society gradually disappears. With the change of his occupation, man's physical and mental make-up also changes. A modern machine-tool worker is vastly different from the black-smith of olden times; and nothing in his occupation compels him to be different from any other man occupying any other position in modern society, except one thing—leisure.

Leisure was the privilege of the few who were exempted in earlier civilisation from manual labour so that they might devote themselves exclusively to the study of laws and signs or scriptures necessary for the administration of the community and the propitiation of the gods.

They had to be necessarily few, because each man could hardly produce more than needed for himself, and had to do over-work, so to say, to provide for those deputed to look after public affairs. As tools improved, the community could afford some more leisured leaders and did so in the hope of even better propitiating the gods and administering the affairs of society. Thus, in the course of time, a growingly large class of leisured aristocracy developed and continued doing so until society became top-heavy, and the labouring multitude became all but crushed under the burden of a growing and increasingly coercive aristocratic leisured class, which had long ceased to perform its function of benefitting society as a whole by maintaining a lawful equilibrium and improving the material condition of the community, be it by invoking the grace of the super-natural forces or by other means; but which had made the promotion of its own privileges and interests the sole aim of its existence.

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### **Legacy of French Revolution : The Rights of Man**

This state of affairs reached its climax in the middle-ages, and led, through the Peasant Wars and whole series of other social upheavals, to the French Revolution which declared the Rights of Man. These rights were to belong to every human being. There was to be none exempted from their application. That was the single greatest step mankind had made towards Democracy as the ideal political organisation of civilised society. The Rights of Man, theoretically, abolished social privileges and distinctions by right of birth, and established the equality of all human beings. After the breakdown of the quasi-

democratic experiment of ancient Greece, all government has been exercised by the grace of God, with religious sanctions and by means of at best sanctimonious cant of philanthropic well-meaningness "for the people" or at worst, of sheer suppression and coercion. Now it was to be based on Constitutions, in the framing of which the people themselves, or growingly large sections of it, were to take part. That is, the peoples were to be ruled with their consent, in a way established through a contract made with their agreement. It was to be government "of the people".

But the theory did not work out as it might have, or ought to have, according to its spirit and letter. The real working of the new democratised form of society was best described by the French author Anatole France, who said that the new laws allowed all men alike to sleep in palaces or under bridges. But the right to sleep in palaces could be exercised only by those possessing the latter; and the right to sleep under the bridges was not coveted by any except those who had nothing else to protectd them from rain and snow. The Rights of Man, and Democracy as practised ever since the French Revolution, did not create conditions enabling man to exercise the rights of equality and liberty which had been theoretically declared to be his.

### **Formal Democracy vs Democratic Practice**

A Great advance indeed had been made by the French Revolution over the ancient Greek concept of Democracy. No more was a large, if not the largest, number of the community plainly debarred from the rights



of participation in the public life and administration. But the right theoretically conceded could not as yet be availed of by the overwhelming majority of the members of society. In fact, a conflict existed between formal democracy and democratic practice. The conflict was the same old division of Greek political life—between Democracy and Oligarchy.

The conditions under which human beings have their existence and perform their labour have vastly changed, and they have shaped a different frame of human mind and consciousness. The labouring multitude, while performing labour with machines, which require deft and skilful handling, has crystallised into a community of articulate individuals. More complicated machinery requires increasingly skilled and consciously reacting labourers. The concentration of social activity in the cities and general urbanisation of civilisation have, on the one hand, congregated a large number of labourers into a collectivity both during and after working hours and, on the other hand, brought poor and rich in closer neighbourhood, compelling a comparison of the conditions of life and naturally engendering aspirations in the labouring man to enjoy himself what he produces, but which he invariably sees going in to the possession of the rich.

Moreover, modern mechanical mass production has immensely increased the amount of goods, to the extent that they now might easily go round the whole of society, thus realising the contents of Democracy—the greatest good to the greatest number—without frittering

away the surplus needed as reservoir of progress or social reserve for emergencies. The labouring man knows that better than anyone else, since it is through his hands that all the goods pass and are produced; and he naturally resents being deprived of things he has learned to covet, knows to be theoretically within his reach, but practically cannot obtain. He resents it all the more when he sees that actually more is produced than can be used by the few, rich and privileged enough to acquire them; that precious goods, which he covets in vain, are destroyed before his very eyes; and that, if it comes to the worst, he is even prevented to produce more than can be used by the rich, although he would want to produce it at least for himself. But he is not allowed to do so; unemployment overtakes him, and he is thus deprived not only of the chance of producing what he would like for himself and might acquire out of his wage if the cost of the product was not arbitrarily fixed beyond his paying capacity—but even of his wage itself.

Unemployment is presented to the worker as a natural catastrophe, a calamity beyond the control of himself or his employer. But civilisation has sufficiently progressed to endow the common man who earn his living by his handiwork with critical faculty. And he is realising the fallacy of this vicious circle of arguments. Democracy, he is told, is the great blessing of civilisation, and every now and then, in Democracy's name, he is asked to give his vote in political elections. If he is conscious of his responsibility as a member of the "ruling people", which is a supposition of Democracy, he will

look for programmes while giving his vote. And he will find in every programme promises held out which would, if fulfilled, bring heaven on earth. But somehow it does not happen. It never works. That is why many have convinced themselves that Democracy is a failure. And even those of the common people, to whom Democracy holds out the greatest promise, seeing what it looks like in practice, are bound to come, at a moderate estimate, to the conclusion that there is something radically wrong with Democracy as they know it to exist even in the most civilised modern countries of Europe and America.

**R**ADICAL means "from the root"; the word is derived from the Latin word "radix". If it is found that there is something radically wrong with Democracy, it means that we must dig deeper to the roots of the concept of Democracy, find out what is wrong, and re-state and reevaluate it. That is the significance of Radical Democracy. Seeing what older forms of Democracy have come to be, it can be stated that Democracy must be Radical, or it is not Democracy, is not what its name purports to be, is not rule of the people.

### **Rule of the people**

If rule of the people means nothing but that every man may have his say once in a while, when voting in elections, we can count a number of democratic countries. But if the rule of the people means that the advantages and privileges of power and sovereignty are to benefit every member of the community, according to his needs and commensurate with his contribution to the wealth and progress of the community, we shall look in vain for a truly democratic country, except perhaps that we may find genuine and more or less effective efforts in that direction, here or there.

But what is the meaning of the people ruling themselves unless they can thereby raise the level of entire society, which means, of every member of society, to the height

and excellence previously enjoyed by individual rulers or by ruling castes or classes? This is today possible. Because, modern means of production have enabled man to produce enough food and offer commodities for every human being on earth to enjoy luxuries which could not even be dreamed of by the most exalted rulers of man in the past. And for that nobody on earth need work for more than six or perhaps even less hours a day. So that, what was the exclusive privilege of individual rulers or ruling sections of a people, namely, freedom from drudgery and leisure to follow higher pursuits than the mere earning of a livelihood, have become the due share of each human being to-day by virtue of the principle of equality guaranteed by the Rights of Man as well as by virtue of the actual and potential wealth of humanity under the conditions of modern civilisation.

Going to the root of the problem, it presents itself as follows: Democracy vests in the people the power to rule itself. Power in itself tempts none but the perversely ambitious—the prototype of the worst ancient tyrants. Power is coveted and necessary for achieving an end. The end for which power is needed and coveted by the people is to benefit the people and promote its material and spiritual progress and well-being. For that, it is necessary, firstly, that the people should be sufficiently conscious and educated to formulate the terms of progress and well-being; and secondly, that instruments be created for them to exercise their power effectively.

Rome was not built in one day, and Radical Demo-

cracy, that is, real Democracy, will not be established anywhere from today to to-morrow. The practice of real Democracy may evolve in a process of trial and error. But the science of the evolution of society has sufficiently developed from Plato to Karl Marx to establish clearly how Democracy should function; and its failures in the past have equally clearly established how it cannot function. Thus, by a process of elimination, and constant comparison between the practices of Democracy with its postulations, it should be possible to arrive at a working form of real, that is, Radical Democracy.

It is evident, for instance, that Parliamentary Democracy, the generally practised system in the more advanced modern countries, cannot be real Democracy. It is not "rule *by* the people"; it is at best a pretense of "rule *for* the people". And those who took it upon themselves to determine what is good for the people, mostly differed very greatly in their opinion from those on whom the good was to be conferred. But having elected somebody on the strength of his promises, the people have no means to control what he does in Parliament on their behalf; they may not elect him again, but in the meantime the mischief may have been done. And in the working out of the decisions themselves taken *by* their representatives in the sanctum of Democracy, they have no say at all; it is all being dispensed from above, and they can at best *protest—mostly in vain*.

The very fact that there is no agreement on what is good for the people, and how it is to be conferred on them, brings us again to the root of the problem. It is

clearly good for the people that they should work not more than necessary for producing enough and to spare of all that is desirable for each who is desirous. And that each who is desirous should be in a position to acquire all he wants, since enough and to spare exists for all. The restriction on progress in the form of scarcity, which made Democracy an unrealisable Utopia in days when the majority of men, in unlimited working hours, could not produce enough even for the ruling aristocracy, has disappeared—theoretically. Yet, we see the majority of the human race deprived even today of what is accepted as requirements and attributes of civilisation. Humanity thus is degrading itself to an anachronistic state of civilisation by refusing to enjoy the very advantages which human ingenuity throughout the ages has created and is to-day presenting to it. Why this absurdity?

No decent man ought to enjoy riches or privileges for the mere reason that they distinguish him from those less fortunate, who cannot afford them. Thus, if it is not proposed to take anything away from him in order to give it to others, but only that conditions be created in which the standard of living of the whole of society will increasingly approximate the status of the previously fortunate few, why should the latter object? And if they do object, should their objection be tolerated and allowed to stand in the way to the achievement of that desirable state of affairs aimed at by Democracy—when it is practically within reach—where the people rule themselves in such a way that each individual can exist and develop on a level previously accessible only to an exalted minority; where,

that is to say, the masses of the people will no longer be "the rabble", the "unwashed multitude"? Humanity may now be spared the insult of such company of compromising fellow-men all will be as educated, as well behaved, as cultured and clean washed and endowed with good taste, as there could not possibly be more than a few in days when soap and books and schools, clean housing, limited working hours and the consequent leisure, were not known to the majority of mankind.

The fact is that, with all universal professions in favour of Democracy, there are some who do object to things being done which are necessary for the creation of condition in which real Democracy can be established and function. It is necessary to find out who they are, to deal with their objections and arguments and, if we find the latter invalid, to discover their real motive. The arguments are better dealt with as they arise while we shall find out what is necessary to be done to create conditions for the functioning of real Democracy. But the real motive can be easily traced.

### **Property and Effective Power**

Power and privileges associated with rulership have always been based on material possessions. In the earliest days, the ruler was the priest who in the name of his deity, extorted tributes from the community with which to placate the wrath of the super-human and invoke its grace, but which in reality became his property. Property conditions have ever since been attached to the exercise not only of



rule, but even of ordinary political rights. And where in most recent times the express property conditions have *de jure* lapsed, the tradition still persists *de facto*. In Feudalism, when land was the main means of production, the ownership of land was, as if naturally, the sole stepping stone to political power. The greatness and role of a prince was determined by the extensiveness and wealth of his estate. With the introduction of the modern means of production, political power was increasingly vested in the owner of the new means of production, or of the means of exchanging, distributing and transporting the commodities produced with them. In a country as modern and civilised and as professedly democratic as Great Britain, the man in Parliament the framers of the democratic laws and the shapers of the destinies of the British people, will be found to prove this assertion to an amazing degree, not only in the House of Lords, whose very existence is proof enough of the contention, but even in the House of Commons. In spite of the Rights of Man, and in spite of the professed ideal of "rule of the people", this is still so even to this day.

And this is so in spite of the fact that big property is vested in a decreasing minority, and ever larger numbers of all peoples are de-propertyed, "de-classed," without counting those many more who have never had any property at all. The majority of the people, as always and everywhere, is even now deprived of the unwritten property qualification for effective power. Even to-day, merit is only a secondary qualification, as merit without property remains ineffective as a qualification for positions

of power. In spite of all theoretical equality (to sleep in palaces or under bridges), this remains essentially very much the same as it was with the slaves of Greece or the Fourth Estate in the middle ages—with the relative embellishments in the condition of the propertyless classes brought about by the more delicate tastes and consciences of modern civilised rulers and property-owners. The few exceptions frequently adduced as examples of equality, at least of opportunity, irrespective of birth and property, of dish-washers rising to the status of millionaires, are only just enough to prove the rule to the contrary; and even as exceptions, not even God's own America is likely to be able to produce many, if any, such examples in these days when that "New World" has come of age, having created its own tradition of vested interest and reserve spheres of monopolistic power and influence.

Because, the fact is that, while the law of Democracy, in its majestic grandeur, allowed each and every man alike to sleep either in palaces or under bridges, it did not give him the opportunity to choose between the two. The fact is that there is no equality of opportunity in what is generally, though not quite legitimately, called the Democratic World.

But while the ancient slaves and the later Fourth Estate could never, under the then given conditions, even dream of being owners or sharers in big property and derive from that qualification the right to shape the destinies of the community as a whole, modern civilisation has brought about a very fundamental change in this elation of forces in society.

The system called capitalism, which introduced and developed modern mechanised production, and under which civilisation has made more rapid strides than in any other period of history, has developed to a point where the progress it has itself brought about has outgrown its own premises and most cherished contentions, and strikes at the roots of its very existence.

### **Incentive to Progress**

The incentive to progress is said to be private property, its increase and the profit derived from its successful use or investment. This is a generalisation from the ways in which the phenomenal progress of modern capitalist society started and developed. The artisan owned his tools and therefore also owned the goods he produced with them as well the price he got from their sale. But when the artisan could no longer compete with goods of a similar nature as his products, but produced on a mass scale, much cheaper and sometimes better, by mechanical means of production, which only the fewest of artisans could afford to acquire themselves, he was compelled to become one of many workers employed by the owners of the new machines against the payment of a wage, irrespective of, and without any relation to, the value of the goods he produced. On the other hand, the owner of the machines might have no idea of the practical process of production, but the sale proceeds of the products was his, by virtue of his ownership in the machines, and he took care to pay his workers less than what the product was worth, so that the margin between his expenses and his sale proceeds might grow

larger and larger, providing him with a bigger surplus, from which to buy new machines and thus make more profit.

While this process led, on the one hand, to the industrial revolution which enhanced the progress of civilisation so phenomenally, it led, on the other hand, to properties much bigger than could ultimately be owned by single individual proprietors. A millionaire and head of a huge modern monopolistic concern is not really its owner any more. He may possess the majority of its "shares," but a large number of other people, who may be living in all parts of the world and not even be known to the millionaire, whose name the firm may yet carry, have also share, in the property; they are collective owners of the property.

Thus, while modern industrial civilisation has, on the one hand, collectivised the performance of labour by a group of often highly skilled and, in modern countries, highly developed and educated human beings, it has, on the other hand, practically socialised property. At least the principle of socialised, that is, collectively owned property has been *de facto* established by the very protagonists of the most individualist and privately owned property.

The share-holders of a commercial or industrial concern may not trouble its directing proprietors in the usual run, while business goes well and some portion of the profit, according to the number of shares they hold, accrues to them. But nominally they have the right to

interfere in the management of the big concern; and if business is bad, they may even have the power to create considerable trouble for the "proprietor" who is in fact rather a manager only of his firm on behalf of many other co-shareholders, who may even drive him out of his own firm or force him to declare bankruptcy.

The incentive that makes such a manager-owner of a big joint stock concern display initiative in improving his business cannot, therefore, really be called private ownership as such. The property is owned by many and the profit is shared by all of them, except for what the owner-manager can manage to conceal from them by fraud. This is a vastly different state of affairs from the early ownership of the first comparatively puny machines. It destroys the very dogma that the profit motive is the main spring of human effort and creativeness. It will remain true that most effort has its incentive in the desire for gain and improvement of one's position in society. But that is not 'profit.' Material improvement of his condition is man's legitimate aim; there is nothing base or reprehensible in it; it leads to higher culture and perfection; and indeed, the aim of Democracy is more "gain", more material wealth and more amenities for all.

Profit is the gain secured by depriving some participants in the process of production of their legitimate share; concretely, by giving actual producers less than what according to their contribution to the process ought to be their share. What is "legitimate" is determined by the owner of the machines; and since he considers it to be

his function to make more profit in order to own more machines in order to produce more goods (in a community where there are not yet enough goods to go round), he determines the share of the labourer to be "legitimately" as low as possible.

This in the beginning naturally gave the relation between owner-employer and worker a character of very personal and direct exploitation. And this relation led to struggles between the owning and the labouring classes, a struggle which grew more embittered as the only legitimate factor in determining the worker's wages as low as possible disappeared with the—at least potential—abolition of scarcity.

The enormous wealth created by modern mass production naturally engendered in the labourers the demand for a greater share in the fruits of their labour. But the lure of owning more and more made the owner of the means of production shrink at the idea of slowing down the process of accumulation of his individual property by doling out a large share to his labourers. This perhaps natural, if not very laudable, instinct is still working to-day, although the development of big properties themselves has knocked the bottom off this motive of private profit, as we have seen above.

For, the share-holder in Honolulu knows nothing about the worker in a concern, say in Luxembourg, whose shares bring him a good dividend each year. The element of exploitation has become very impersonal; and he would be just as satisfied if the dividend were obtained by a

smaller rate of profit on a larger number of goods produced. Or, he would not care if he could derive his income from shares in some national enterprise at home, and leave the Luxembourgeois to enjoy the profits of their own production. That would only presuppose that there be profitable production in Honolulu, and that the inhabitants of that part of the world were collective owners of their means of production. But that would lead us too far away from the scope of this study.

The point is that the element of exploitation has become very impersonal and totally superfluous. And if we generalise the relation, assuming each member of society to be a share-holder in all enterprises of production and distribution and others of common interest to the community, the change-over would be only a quantitative one. But the relatively small addition in quantity would have qualitative significance. It would be the difference between merely formal and real, that is, Radical Democracy. And why should the Manager or Director of a big oil concern, for instance, have less incentive or energy or enthusiasm to enlarge and improve his enterprise if, instead of a thousand, his concern will have a hundred million shareholders? There are few big concerns left to-day owned by one man who may run away with his "property" in the form of a big factory. Indeed, the privately owned, one-man properties are small fry in the modern industrial world. In most cases, the biggest of millionaires are paid for their services, though very highly paid, out of the profits of a concern in whose property thousands of others hold shares. Whatever

their income over and above their "pay", they are supposed to use it for increasing plants and introducing more means of production. If the latter function is performed by the State, with themselves as the experts participating in the planning of such enlargements and improvements of production, they ought to be legitimately satisfied with their pay, which a highly civilised society will fix in accordance with its high estimation for the value of the experts, planners and executors of the production of human wealth.

The proposition is to remove the property qualification for political power on the part of a fortunate, more or less, few by extending the share in all property to the whole of the community. That will be Radical Democracy. The productive capacity of modern civilisation is big enough to effect this change. At last, society can produce enough goods to go round to all without an impoverishment of society as a whole, or even without lowering the standard of living of any particular section of society. Property in the means of production having become so impersonal, no man should care what happens to the heaps of paper representing shares in properties he may never have seen, so long as his standard of living does not appreciably go down. And if the rise of many equals dampens his enthusiasm for work and creativeness, he should be dealt with as an anti-social element, a perversity in these days, one hundred and fifty years or more after the French Revolution proclaimed the "Rights of man" to be liberty and equality.

### **U. S. S. R. An Example**

Thus, the obstacle in the way to the practice of



real Democracy, which consists in the factual usurpation of power and its material privileges by the propertied classes, can be removed by extending ownership of the main means of production to the community as a whole. Apart from the gigantic social experiment in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on lines democratic in this sense, the present war has paved the way to the general application of this truly democratic proposition. This war has proved that industries and the whole machinery of production and distribution, trade, commerce and transport, even though hitherto "privately owned", are national assets, and that the wellbeing of the whole society depends on their being administered in the interest of society as a whole. The emergency of this war has established the precedent that whenever private interest in the administration of those public assets clashes with the interest of the community, the latter must prevail and over-ride private interest and property claims. If such clashes happen in war time, there is no gainsaying that they may also happen in peace time. And if it was right to safe-guard public interest in war by overriding private interests and property claims, the same must logically be admitted for peace times also. The precedent having been established during the war it may be legitimately expected that after the war also private property claims and profit motive will not again be allowed to stop production when prices tend to fall because "too much," is produced; when, to remedy the embarrassment of "too much," artificial scarcity is created to drive prices up again; while the labouring masses, who could have purchased the coveted commodities at a cheaper

price, are again deprived of the chance; and, on top of that, due to the stoppage of further production, they even lose their meagre earnings, due to the unsocial attitude of the private owners of public assets, who would not operate the latter except for private profit, and that of a sufficiently high rate.

### Objections To Radical Democracy

One of the objections to this democratising proposition of Radical Democracy is that public ownership cannot be exercised except through State control; and that State control leads to bureaucracy, under which all affairs of the human community would be administered by paid officials, just as the State machinery is run at present, and that as the latter instance proves, bureaucracy is inefficient and corrupt.

Bureaucracy means the rule of the "bureaux", the offices, that is, the officials, the men behind desks. The term was obviously invented to deprecate that rule. The symbol of that rule is the notorious red tape, with which files are fastened, closed and shelved. Now, papers and documents, and files to contain them, are necessary in every ordered administration, and so are the tapes to hold them together, pending the introduction of more up-to-date and technologically perfected office equipment. No privately owned industrial or commercial concern can do without them. Indeed, the bureaucracy—the officials behind the desks—in the offices of commerce, industry and other privately owned enterprises, is quantitatively much more numerous than those in Government service

all taken together; and qualitatively there is no reason for it to be any different from the latter. Red tape rules in both; and if a file pending in a Government office gets more dusty than in a commercial firm, it is because the latter's documents are more directly concerned with money to come in. And the system prevailing in the larger part of the world to-day has created the notion that money is more important than public affairs as dealt with in the offices of Government. But that is not the fault of bureaucracy as such; it is the fault of the defective-sense of public ethics and responsibility taught in the prevailing system.

To assume that, if the offices of commercial, industrial or other enterprises of public concern will be run on behalf of a Democratic State or under its control, instead of on behalf of one or several private individuals or under their more direct control, they will become as inefficient and indolent as many public offices are often found to be, only because no immediate monetary gain is involved, is rating human nature rather low. Besides, there is a fundamental fallacy involved. For, the majority of officials (human beings working behind the desks in offices) in the privately owned concerns have absolutely no share in the gain of the transactions which they carry on behind their desks. With stoic unconcern, an accountant may make out bills running into astronomical figures, and feel no thrill at the prospect of the money coming in, nor tremble at the thought of the debtor failing to pay. Indeed, in a truly democratic State, where every member of society is shareholder in all the national assets, he stands

to gain much more, both in actual earning as well as in general terms of a raised standard of living, with cultural, social and technological improvements introduced by the Democratic State out of the profits (surplus) of democratically owned public assets. Moreover, the impersonal control of such enterprises by the State provides more readily for the welfare of its employees (which is to be a matter of policy in a Democratic State) than a private owner who individually loses whatever his employees gain.

### **Not An Utopian Dream**

These are not utopian dreams of a philanthropic idealist. What else, in principle, is the Beveridge plan, or Bevin's scheme of rebuilding England's cities after the war? These are attempts at democratising (communalising or collectivising) a large part of the national wealth, sharing it out to each member of the community by guaranteeing him an increasingly safe and decent human existence by means of planning and controlling all enterprises of public interest. And are not all enterprises covering the processes of production, exchange, distribution and transport of public interest? Planning and controlling include the investment, the cost (and distribution of the cost) of production, the kind and quantity of goods produced and the disbursement of the income (profit or surplus) from production. It does not mean giving the peon the same remuneration as the manager. Although, when civilisation will be high enough to produce enough for both to live in palaces and travel in luxury aeroplanes or paint pictures in their leisure time, there is no objection

in principle, even to this. But it means definitely a narrowing down of the gap between the poor and the rich, until there will be no more poor, and all will get richer and richer by the effort put in by every single member of society in his particular place in the mechanism of production, exchange, distribution or transport, research or education, or any other branch of human activity in the community.

That this is not an utopia is also proved in Russia. All wealth is democratically owned there. The "profits" of each enterprise (minus a kind of bonus in the form of a "Management's Fund" which is disbursed in cash directly to the members working in a particular enterprise every year) go into the treasury of the State which is in essence truly democratic. For, besides what everybody receives directly in cash as remuneration for his labour, all that accrues to the State out of the surplus of production or transactions in any other branch of public activity, is so used as again to benefit each member of society directly, even if not in cash or otherwise individually doled out. Because, out of that treasury of the State, democratically owned public wealth, new industries are launched to provide more and cheaper goods for all, until there are so many of them and so cheap that money will no longer be needed to acquire them; in this way, bread is already delivered free to each citizen in Moscow every morning at his house door, and of any kind he orders from the communal bread factory—or was so until this war broke out; out of this treasury, cities are built or improved; institutions of art and culture, of public health and recrea-

tion created. And every member of society knows that it is from the profits, or surplus, produced by the services or enterprises in which he works, that these benefits accrue to him, that this year he can spend his one month leave, free of cost, in a new splendid sanatorium, or can send his son, free of cost, to the art school newly built in his town, or can shift with his family to one of these lovely bungalows in the new residential quarters built by the State. And is this not incentive enough to work, if it is clear that everyone's effort and the success of all the enterprises will lead to ever greater expansion of these benefits shared by all? It is said that even now, or before the war broke out, all these benefits together were yet less than a worker enjoyed in the more modern Western countries. But that is because in Russia they began on a much lower level than a similar process might be begun, and lead to much more rapid and splendid success, in those modern Western countries. And while much has been made of Soviet bureaucracy, none would to-day dispute that nothing but the most sublime enthusiasm, initiative, energy, devotion—and efficiency, could have achieved the miracles that the Soviet Union has performed in the last two years of this war.

Thus, even the last objection has been disproved. And even if the very few remaining private owners, or quasi private owners, of big business will lose interest, enthusiasm or energy for running their concerns profitably and efficiently, merely because instead of a thousand they will now have to have a million or many million shareholders, that will not harm the enterprise itself. Because,

the living element of bureaucracy, the human being behind the desks, will have become, from a human automation, an interested party, quite sufficiently equipped to keep the machinery running. There are many also higher up in the "privately owned" bureaucracy who know all about everything, as well as their bosses. And they stand nothing to lose; indeed, they too stand to gain by a democratisation of the economic life of the community. When the "bosses" insist on the assertion that only private ownership gives the incentive to run big affairs successfully they seem to include in their class at least their higher clerical staff; and we have seen what a big fallacy this is. They forget how few they are, and if conscious of it, might not like to attach such certificate of low character to none but themselves; they speak of "human nature," in general, oblivious that very few "human nature's have any reason for profit motive, or any chance of seeing it operating effectively in themselves. If they would remember how few they are who privately stand to gain from private ownership, they would perhaps become conscious of the slur upon themselves, involved in this dogmatic contention; and also of the fact that the very smallness of their number constitutes a danger to their very existence as private owners. Because society might much rather throw them overboard than see the majority of its members continue to be deprived of the benefits of a truly democratic regime, which is also economically so. There ought to be also no reason why, with a fair and increasingly rising standard of living guaranteed to them, as leading members of society, the lure of great initiative and enterprise, of adventurous technological feats and

vast administration spheres, should not continue to attract the talents previously displayed in similar fields privately owned, merely because they would have to do so on behalf of a State truly representing the whole of the people, instead of the "free citizens" only,—to fall back in the ancient Greek analogy. Because administration on behalf of the State is also run by men. The Democratic State is not a dead and wooden something. It is the organisation which a highly civilised and developed human society has given to itself so as to benefit increasingly from the fruits of civilisation, and at the cost of none but those who oppose human progress.

The final objection, then, is that men are not as yet so civilised or conscious or educated as to be imbued with so much public spirit, disinterestedness and high-mindedness; that the slacker in man will get the upper-hand if the fever of private gain does not spur him on. Well, progress has never been made in any sphere of human activity by measuring the required effort by the standards of the average, or by setting the aim according to the comprehension of the most modestly equipped. The problem of rule of society involves the question of leadership. Nature having endowed human beings with a variety of talents, both in kind and in degree, there have always been leaders of man, by whom men have allowed themselves to be led, convinced that their lead would be to their benefit. Democracy too will have its leaders. There will no longer be rulers and ruled. But the people, in order to exercise its rule, will throw up its own leaders. And with the abolition of the lure of



gain and privileges, as more or less exclusively reserved for the rulers, merit will become the supreme qualification of exercising the power of the people, its authority and its sovereignty. On the other hand, since nothing but merit and aptitude for executing the rule of the people, by the people, through its own deputies, is the criterion of leadership, any aberration or deterioration of false pretenses on the part of those deputed to run the affairs of society, or any error of judgment in deputing a particular person, can be rectified easily by declaring invalid the sanction for his holding a particular office, and recalling him from his function of leadership as incapable of performing it worthily. As to the ability of the ordinary man to judge by the new criterion, modern civilisation has brought with it a general level of comprehension among the masses of the people, at least in the more advanced countries, high enough for them to choose intelligently; and with the progress of civilisation, and more so with the democratisation of the whole life of society, this general level will rise to the heights-achieved by any exclusive minority in the past. That there have been more misleaders than true leaders of men in the past was primarily due to the backwardness of the majority of those to be led: but their chances will disappear with the backwardness of the masses, i. e. with civilisation itself.

### **Why Radical Democracy?**

The concept of Democracy is a product of civilisation. We have seen that, in primitive society, Democracy was an impossibility. In the the present phase of social evolution, it

has become possible. In the spirit of progress, whatever is possible, is also necessary. In this sense, the progress of mankind, while having made Democracy possible, has also imposed on it the obligation to make the possible real. For, Democracy being the product of civilisation, there comes a time when civilisation itself cannot progress unless the idea conceived by itself is realised. Democracy to-day is like a child which has matured in the womb of civilisation, and the time for its birth has come. Unless it is delivered, not only will it die without seeing light of day, but it will decompose and kill the mother herself. The convulsions of this war are the pains of civilisation in labour. If after this war the child is not born, we are in for the breakdown of another civilisation, another and perhaps final relapse into barbarism. And while primitive barbarism does not present to the modern man a picture he prides in as part of his history, twentieth century barbarism will look worse.

In order that the child, which we have baptised Radical Democracy, be born and civilisation be saved, all that is needed is, to do what is possible, and therefore necessary, to do. And this is nothing more nor less than to make the goods, which after this war will be possible of production in immensely greater quantities than ever before, available to the greatest number, that is to all. This, in a nutshell, is Radical Democracy. It means that the interests of the majority of the people—a majority so overwhelming that it can be said to comprise the people as a whole—demands that Democracy be extended from the formal political to the essential economic Democracy,

the privileges and material gains of power will be shared by all the constituents of the ruling power, which is, the people. They will no longer be the prerogative of individuals, rulers, or ruling classes. The character of individuals guiding the administration and governance of society will thereby also be fundamentally affected. True administrative talent, capacity of surveying human affairs and planning in a wide sweep the activities of the human community, will come to their own. Plato's boldest dream of "Philosopher Kings" will be translated into the reality of twentieth century democratic civilisation, where every human being can be as educated and cultured and high-minded as a philosopher, and as free and rich and mighty as the king of the past.

